



Tradesmen Working Indoors

Vermiculite and Asbestos

In or Around a Home or Business in Libby...

EPA Information Center * 501 Mineral Avenue, Libby, MT 59923 * (406) 293-6194

October 2005



**Forms of
Vermiculite**

Vermiculite in Libby

Vermiculite was used in a variety of forms for decades in and around Libby homes as a soil additive, a lightweight aggregate for concrete, and for attic insulation, among other things.

If vermiculite is present it may contain Libby asbestos. EPA likely knows about vermiculite, tremolite rock, or waste rock that is accessible, and will be removing it within the next several years. EPA is moving forward with cleanups in Libby as quickly as time and resources allow. In some cases, EPA may leave vermiculite in walls or other relatively inaccessible places.

Remodeling, repair, electrical, or plumbing work may uncover vermiculite that was otherwise sealed in place. Always ask the homeowner if they know where you might find vermiculite.

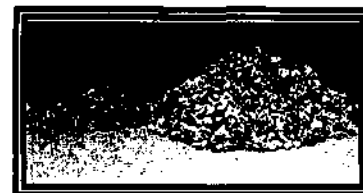
It is possible that you may unexpectedly find vermiculite after starting your work, perhaps by cutting into a wall or uncovering something that EPA or the homeowner did not know about. EPA strongly cautions you not to work with vermiculite or disturb it any way that may cause Libby asbestos contamination to become airborne.

Improper work practices can contaminate the interior of the home or building where you are working!

Precautionary Steps to Take So You Can Get On With Your Job

Please review this list of basic precautions for guidance on what to do if you discover or suspect vermiculite while you are working:

1. **Always notify the resident.** If they haven't already told you about it, they may not know.
2. For a small quantity such as a handful of vermiculite, you or the homeowner can carefully wet wipe it and throw it away.
3. **Never vacuum vermiculite with a regular vacuum.** HEPA filter vacuums are effective on small quantities of vermiculite. Residents who had a cleanup done may have a HEPA vacuum. If not, please call the EPA Information Center.
4. For larger quantities of vermiculite such as what you may find in a breached wall, don't disturb the material. **Do not vacuum large amounts of vermiculite** - even with a HEPA vacuum.
5. **No matter the volume or location of known or suspected vermiculite, contact the EPA Information Center and Lincoln County Sanitarian. In the future, Libby, Lincoln County, and EPA are considering a formal notification requirement. Please notify us early to protect yourself and your workers and to ensure the most appropriate action is taken.**



Raw and Popped Ore

Libby asbestos is considerably more toxic than other commercial asbestos products. It should be avoided or handled with extreme care. The health risk from exposure to **all** asbestos depends greatly on the amount of asbestos in the material you are disturbing and how long the exposure lasts. Frequent exposures to high levels of asbestos for lengthy periods of time pose a significant risk. Little disturbance of small amounts of vermiculite insulation or other products containing a low level of asbestos poses a smaller risk, especially if you take basic precautions as outlined above.

Common dust or surgical masks are not effective against asbestos fibers! Wearing a respirator with a HEPA filter is the best way to avoid breathing asbestos fibers. However, they must be used properly, or exposure may still occur! For information on respirator requirements, visit the OSHA's website: www.osha.gov/SLTC/respiratoryprotection.



Who Can I Contact With Questions About Asbestos ?

**EPA Information Center - 293-6194
Lincoln County Sanitarian - 293-7781 x228**

The EPA, Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), or Lincoln County may send personnel out to inspect a situation involving vermiculite or Libby asbestos and give guidance. Guidance may include advising the owner to allow EPA or a licensed asbestos contractor or inspector to take samples, conduct cleanup or take other special measures to reduce the risk of asbestos exposure.

Explore EPA's Libby Asbestos web site at:
www.epa.gov/region8/superfund/libby

**Montana Department of Environmental
Quality
Asbestos Control Program (406) 444-5300**

Montana law requires that employers must hire a licensed inspector to determine if asbestos is present before doing any work. Some asbestos is not associated with the Libby vermiculite mine. It is regulated by the Montana DEQ. If non-Libby asbestos is found, it should be dealt with according to Montana regulations.

Explore Montana DEQ's Asbestos web site at:
<http://www.deq.mt.gov/Asbestos>

Please learn about the risks of asbestos exposure and basic precautions by reviewing the fact sheets below. The fact sheets are available at:

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1. **Living With Vermiculite** - Oct. 2003. Provides information about the potential risks of contaminated vermiculite and precautions you can take.
2. **HEPA Vacuum Cleaner Program** - Dec. 2003. Provides information on the effectiveness of HEPA vacuums and describes their role in Libby's cleanup.
3. **Risk - Past, Present and Future** - June 2005. Describes EPA's process of risk assessment and how we work toward reducing risk.

Explore the EPA web site and its links at: www.epa.gov/region8/superfund/libby